

Title: A Dark Life

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A Dark Life:
The Biography of the Lich
Named Rune Artisem

by
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1. Early Life

Little is known about the early history of the being that called himself Rune Artisem. According to his own reports (which should not be taken as absolute truth, given Artisem's documented history of deceit and misinformation), he was a bastard child born in Vesper to a woman of loose morals and an aristocrat of Lord British's court. A powerful wizard named Monric took the young street urchin in to serve as the concluding part of a magical experiment. Somehow, according to Artisem, Monric was able to transfer his knowledge and power of necromancy into the young boy and instructed him to seek out the Order of the Ebon Skull.

2. Serving the Ebon Skull

Artisem traveled to the frozen wasteland of Caina to find the Ebon Skull as Monric had instructed him to do. Assisting the Order during its dealings

with Aderick Volten, Artisem proved himself to be worthy of entering its necromancer sect and was placed under the tutelage of Pandora the Fallen. Artisem quickly rose in the ranks of the Order, acquiring the title of 'Magus of the Arcane,' a seat on the Ebon Council, and became second-in-command of the necromancer sect, supreme only to Dealthagar and the Lich Lord in his mastery of the dark arts of undeath. He became friends with Treadeau Du'rome and Alucard de'Lenfent during this time and was complicit in several of their political plots in Caina. Artisem played an important role in the trapping of Aleph Aeirs's soul and a scheme involving a young woman named Lena Solis.

He was also known for his devoted management of the Morn Cirith rune library (indeed, Artisem was well-known for his love of rune libraries and had maintained several at one point). Around this time, Artisem published a controversial work entitled "Elves, Orcs, and Other Nonsense" which caused a great deal of friction between the Order and their allies, the Stormreaver Orc Clan. The Stormreaver's chief, Grishnak, angrily placed a bounty on Artisem's head for this undignified text before being pacified through several diplomatic meetings with representatives of the Ebon Skull. Yet Artisem

later, at the urging of Du'rome, wrote a set of inflammatory laws, known as "The Artisem Laws", which targeted demi-humans in the city of Caina. "The Artisem Laws" were approved by Mayor de'Lenfent and brutally enforced for a time before silently being overturned by a later administration.

During his time with the Order, Artisem made the fateful decision to become a lich, gaining tremendous powers at the cost of his own humanity. Many remember the Artisem of this time being more and more focused on increasing his own power. It is said he increasingly became paranoid about attempts on his life and was rarely seen without his demon servant Verimos at his side. Becoming a lich was likely a method in elating his own fears about a premature death. Yet a most unexplainable event soon occurred in his history at this point. For reasons unknown, Artisem left the Order of the Ebon Skull to create a new guild, the Society of Arcane Shadows. There have been several theories as to why this devoted zealot of Oblivion would take such a course.

Some believe it was at the wishes of the Order's top leadership, who were planning to saturate the Shadow Conclave with several puppet guilds friendly to the plans of the Ebon Skull (although this has never been proven, Artisem's devotion

to the Lich Lord during his time as Lord of the Society is well-documented). Others cite increasing friction between Artisem and certain members of the Ebon Council as the main reason. It also cannot be forgotten that Artisem became increasingly focused on gathering more power for himself and that by creating his own guild would thus free him from the Order's hierarchical structure.

Whatever the reason, he created the Society of Arcane Shadows with a fellow Ebon Skull necromancer, Lynne Darkthorne, several years after serving as one of the Order's most terrifying figures.

3. The Society of Arcane Shadows

Artisem founded the Society of Arcane Shadows with the stated purpose of gathering rare magical objects and relics for his own personal use. The Society's first act was an attack on Moonglow's Lycaeum where they pilfered numerous arcane tomes and slaughtered many bystanders and guards in the process. The Society was quickly admitted into the Shadow Conclave and it was not uncommon to find its members assisting the Ebon Skull on joint operations. One such incident involving the Order and the Society was the corruption of the Sage of Spirituality, Umbra Moonstone, into the Sage of Hythloth by means of a powerful ritual conducted by Artisem and the High

Priest of Oblivion,
Bal-Anon Dak.

The Society would go on to serve Artisem and Darkthorne loyally and effectively. A notable use of the Society by Artisem came when Monric, long since murdered by the agents of Lord British, returned from the dead. Monric's return was a direct threat to Artisem and even saw the powerful lich temporarily immobilized until Monric's second death at the hands of the Society.

4. Conquest of Skara Brae and Cove

His near destruction from Monric's return pushed Artisem into madness. He became obsessed with power and his own preservation. He sought out the fabled Soul Stone of Vi'lkeni, a small jaded stone that was said to amplify one's own power based on the number of souls it stored. With this, the Society launched a successful invasion of Skara Brae, sealing the island-city off with a large naval blockade. Realizing that the Regency and its allies would easily be able to retake Skara Brae, Artisem performed a powerful ritual, that culminated with the sacrifice of a young child, Angelica Di'Fona, daughter of Prince Malacite of Nujel'm and Crystal Ice, one of Artisem's minions, that bound the minds and souls of Skara Brae's citizens to his own phylactery. Any invasion of Skara Brae would now

become a bloodbath of innocents as its people would now willingly give their lives to repeal any army that would attempt its liberation.

Artisem, now calling himself "The Overlord of Skara Brae", demanded that the Regency, led by Regent Daryl Stormcrow and Aleph Aeirs, who still harbored a personal grudge against Artisem, sign a treaty that would have legalized his occupation of Skara Brae. The Regency, however, became fully committed to freeing Skara Brae as quickly as possible. Learning the secrets behind Artisem's ritual, and the need to locate and destroy his phylactery, the Regency began an all-out offensive to rid Sosaria of Artisem and his Society. Yet Artisem knew where the Regency would look and was not at all worried. Before the invasion, Artisem had amassed a large tract of secluded land, consisting of several buildings, that he called Shadowspire.

At the center of Shadowspire was the Tower of Anganmandi, the citadel of the Society. He proudly left his phylactery in a hidden, secured room there, thinking that it was absolutely unassailable. Meanwhile, he turned his attention to other cities that he thought ripe for the taking. The necromancer Dryzzid Lossatarot, who had been trained by Artisem in the Order and who had also defected with him to the

Society, launched a brilliant invasion of Cove, taking the city in the name of the Society. Citizens of Cove still cringe when they recollect the day that Artisem, Darkthorne, and other leaders of the Shadow Conclave, including the Lich Lord of the Ebon Skull, marched into the city for their dark victory celebration.

Dryzzid was made the Society's governor of Cove and Artisem turned his attention to yet a third city, the peaceful town of Wilmeth.

Fortunately, Wilmeth was able to resist Artisem's efforts to claim it, which never amounted to anything more than political intrigue.

5. Defeat

At a loss with what to do with Skara Brae and its Overlord, the Regency and its allies grimly prepared for the much dreaded invasion. Artisem was becoming more unstable and unpredictable.

Random acts of terror were committed in his name to frighten his enemies and he issued a series of arrest warrants for high level members of the Regency. Throughout all of this, the number of souls he gathered in the Soul Stone of Vi'lkeni increased tenfold, and with that his own personal power. Most importantly, he even split his soul into two - one part to reside within his phylactery, the other part sealed within the elusive Lynne Darkthorne - in order to frustrate the Regency and to assure

his survival no matter what.

Absolute victory was surely his, but this ultimately did not come to be. Though the details are unclear, it is said that an unknown band of adventurers located the Tower of Anganmandi and, more importantly, the phylactery of Rune Artisem. We know that the phylactery was destroyed - the freedom of the people of Skara Brae proved this beyond a doubt as the spell upon them was so weakened that the mages of the Regency were able to dispel it completely, eliminating the need for an invasion. Documentation survives that attests to the destruction of Artisem's body as well, though the names of those involved were intentionally hidden by the Regency to prevent Artisem's followers from seeking revenge. So while some details here remain unknown, it remains a fact that this prolific and very public creature suddenly vanished in defeat despite the Regency never having publicly commented on this.

Another substantial piece of evidence pointing towards Artisem's defeat was a confirmed sighting of the Soul Stone of Vi'lkeni in the possession of an unidentified figure (the stone has since vanished completely, hopefully for good) who was seemingly unaware of its magical properties. Regardless of what exactly occurred, Sosaria

has ultimately, and thankfully, been spared any additional atrocities of Rune Artisem.

6. Resurgence

With his body and phylactery destroyed, Artisem's vile cruelty quickly disappeared from Sosaria. The Society of Arcane Shadows was decimated and both Skara Brae and Cove were liberated by the forces of the Regency. Yet unknown to any but a few was the fact that part of Artisem's soul still survived sealed within Lynne Darkthorne.

According to rumors, at some point Darkthorne and the surviving members of the Society located and partially repaired Artisem's phylactery. At this point it is believed that Darkthorne expelled the remnants of Artisem's soul from her body and into the damaged phylactery, allowing him to take conscious form again.

It is at this point that Darkthorne disappears from history - no one is known who can tell what happened to her after this. Artisem, however, had been restored, but only partially since the rebuilt phylactery was imperfect and only part of his soul could be summoned. Now resembling a wraith-like apparition melded within shadows, Artisem was only capable of taking an incorporeal form, no longer able to subsist within a physical body. His personality was

greatly changed as well, as he is said to have lost his drive for power, ambition, and eagerness. In this shadow-like form, Artisem dwelt within Anganmandi for several years only attended by Verimos, Vailanna, and Saul the Prophet, the rest of the world unaware of his return.

It was not until a young man named Sethos, who was involved with the second iteration of the Order of the Ebon Skull after the fall of Caina, claimed to be Artisem's son and sought the broken lich out that others became aware of what had transpired. Though Sethos's claim as Rune's son is dubious, and his disappearance from history came almost as quickly as his entry, the government of Skara Brae soon learned of increased activity in Shadowspire. In response, Skara Brae, without consulting the centralized government in Britain, dispatched a war party to completely level every structure within Shadowspire, Anganmandi included. They were met with no resistance as the town was completely abandoned upon their arrival, though the task of destroying Shadowspire was carried out as ordered.

At this point, Artisem's history becomes even less documented. It is known that before Shadowspire was destroyed, he and his servants escaped to Malas where they took up residence in a graveyard

to the far east of Luna. There Artisem lingered for many years as a broken shadow seeking only mere survival. Years passed, and many of Artisem's allies and enemies left this world, his memory lingering on only in history books. At some point, the remnants of the Society, their numbers in the single digits, returned to Felucca and began quietly purchasing land near the site of Shadowspire.

They slowly and quietly rebuilt Shadowspire into a fortified town with assistance from a nearby group of brigands. Once completed, they brought Artisem from Malas to this new Shadowspire. Instead of mad plots aimed at causing enslavement, destruction, and death, Artisem now lingers in Shadowspire as a broken spirit with no purpose other than to exist. Whatever might be the goals of those who still tie themselves to Artisem under the banner of the Society is not known other than that they still loyally follow him. Curiously enough, Artisem's return to Felucca might have gone completely unnoticed had he not, for reasons unknown, travelled to the ruins of Caina and raised Golgotha, the Tower of Skulls and former bastion of the Order of the Ebon Skull, from the rubble it had been reduced to, a demonstration that shows he still commands great power in the dark arts.

As of this writing, it is unknown as to what Artisem's next ploy might be, if there is a next ploy at all. Travellers to Shadowspire describe it as a dreary, fortress-like town beaming with dark magic and lore, its inhabitants suspicious of strangers, but not overtly hostile like orcs. Those travellers that do not make a fuss are said to be watched closely, but allowed a certain degree of autonomy during their time there.

For example, there is a tavern and rune library that are open to the public, though one is inclined to not linger longer than necessary at either establishment. Additionally, those that have travelled to Shadowspire and caught sight of Artisem describe him in almost boogeyman-like terms, a terrifying, wraith-like figure partially oblivious to what is going on around him, and yet intensely focused on other particulars. Hopefully, like other ghosts, Artisem stays confined within Shadowspire and will, over time, disappear from our collective memory.

7. Relationships

During his corporal existence, Artisem was well-known for fostering many relationships with those that walked the path of darkness. He oversaw the training of numerous necromancers for the Order, such as Dryzzid Losstarot, Jergal, Darlantan, Nas'Rath, Drake, Faerl D'vlos, Sal

Veya, and Sepulchrave. He likewise was known to be incredibly charismatic and quickly created a following of those devoted to his cause (the Society) - among the most notable of these were Elrand Silverose and Vailanna (a young female warrior who some believed to have been mentally controlled by Artisem).

Likewise, Artisem was seen many times with Verimos, a demon Artisem trapped within the body of a paladin many years ago. He developed close friendships with Dryzzid Losstarot, Treadeau Du'rome, and Alucard de'Lenfent, and was known for his deep devotion to the Lich Lord. The relationship between Artisem and Darkthorne was one of speculation and gossip, without much being truly known as to the root of their partnership.

The Artisem that survives today as a wraith-like figure is said to confide in no one and exists solely for the purpose of continued existence, a truly broken shadow of his former self.